

# **Welcome to St. Paul's Episcopal Church**

1528 Oakdale Road, Modesto, CA 95355 - (209) 522-3267

[www.saintpaulsmodesto.org](http://www.saintpaulsmodesto.org)

***The Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 21, 2025***



## **Mission Statement**

We are a worshipping, inquiring and inclusive community united in Jesus' name to change the world.

## **Welcoming Statement**

We invite everyone to join in the communal life of the body of Christ, through participation and leadership in this congregation, and by fully sharing in the life and sacraments of this church. We affirm that each person is a child of God, and that those of every race, ethnicity, creed, age, gender, marital status, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation and gender identity are called to be one with us.

Prelude

Chuck Sheaffer

## Opening Hymn #66 "Come thou long expected Jesus"

Blessed be God: Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit

Glory to God for ever and ever.

### Gloria

1. Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and  
peace to his peo - ple on earth. 2. Lord God, heaven - ly  
King, al - mighty God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we  
give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. 3. Lord Je - sus  
Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, 4. you  
take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy

on us; 5. you are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re -  
 ceive our prayer. 6. For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One,  
 you a - lone are the Lord, 7. you a - lone are the Most  
 High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spi - rit, in the  
 glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

Setting: Robert Powell (b. 1932)

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you**

Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES**

*Rev Matthew Kozlowski (adapted)*

### **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Today we light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath, the candle of LOVE.

*The candles are lit.*

“Jesus said to them, I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Let us pray:

**Loving God, your mercy and compassion endure forever. Open our hearts, that we may receive your love; and following the example of your Son, spread that love to a love-starved world. Through Jesus Christ, who loved us to the end. Amen.**

### **The Lessons**

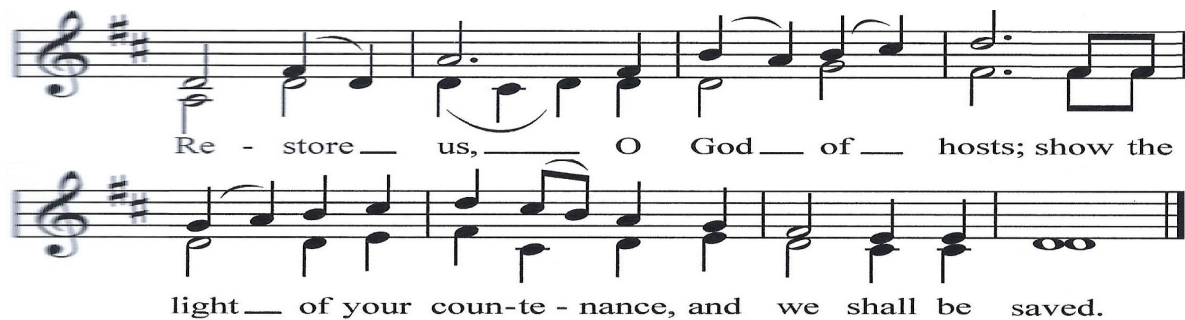
**The first lesson is from Isaiah 7:10-16**

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18



- 1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; \*  
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- 2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, \*  
stir up your strength and come to help us.
- 3 Restore us, O God of hosts; \*  
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 4 O LORD God of hosts, \*  
how long will you be angered  
despite the prayers of your people?
- 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; \*  
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- 6 You have made us the derision of our neighbors, \*  
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- 7 Restore us, O God of hosts; \*  
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, \*  
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.

17 And so will we never turn away from you; \*  
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.

18 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; \*  
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be  
saved.

*The second reading is from Romans 1:1-7*

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gradual Hymn Levas #11 “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”**

*The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew 1:18-25*

**Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When

his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

**Sermon: Fr. Brian Dawson**

*Stillness - the prayer bowl rings to take us in and out of a time of stillness and reflection.*

**The Prayers of the People**

**Reconciliation**

*The Deacon calls us to confession.*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Silence.*

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole**

**heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

*The Priest proclaims God's forgiveness.*

### **Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi**

**Lord make us instruments of your peace.**

**Where there is hatred, let us sow love;**

**where there is injury, pardon;**

**where there is discord, union;**

**where there is doubt, faith;**

**where there is despair, hope;**

**where there is darkness, light;**

**where there is sadness, joy.**

**Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;**

**to be understood as to understand;**

**to be loved as to love.**

**For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;**

**and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.**

### **Blessings and Celebrations**

#### **Birthday Prayer**

**God of joy and celebration, we thank you for the precious gift of life and for the unique journey that each day brings. As this(ese) your servant(s) celebrate(s) another year of life, we pray for your abundant blessings to be upon them. May your grace continue to guide and shape their paths, filling their days with love, purpose, and joy. Amen**



### **Anniversary Prayer**

**Blessed are you, O God, for in the good and the bad times of our life you have stood lovingly by our sides.**

**Bless those whose anniversaries we acknowledge this day.**

**May they remain faithful and loving so that we may be true witnesses to the covenant you have made with us all. Amen.**

### **Prayer for Those We Love**

**Gracious God, we entrust all who are dear to us to your never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come, knowing that you want for us all better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

**Offertory Hymn #497 “How bright appears the Morning Star”**

**Doxology**

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Holy God, our Source and Ending, Alpha and Omega, we give thanks to you! You have called all creation into being, setting the earth on its foundations.

You have spread out the heavens like a tent, and set a boundary to the seas,

you have filled the world with your creatures and called all things good.

The heavenly beings are your messengers night and day,

and with them we sing and give glory to you:

## Sanctus

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Setting: From *A Community Mass*; Richard Proulx (b. 1937)

In these latter days, God leaned toward the earth  
and spoke to us by a Son, Jesus the Beloved.  
Born of our sister Mary and the Holy Spirit,  
guarded by our brother Joseph with fatherly care,  
Jesus came among us as a baby, humbly born,  
cradled beside the beasts and warmed by their breath,  
human as we are, in need of human love.  
Yet kings bowed down before him, bringing gifts  
and emperors were troubled by his reign –  
this Child in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

This Word of God made flesh and full of grace  
was sent to deliver us from our sin,  
from the power of evil and the fear of death.  
As a servant, Jesus emptied himself of might upon the cross,  
and as the risen Anointed One is enthroned at God's right hand  
to bring mercy and justice to all the earth at the end of days.

And so, rejoicing in all God has done for us,  
we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again!**

Holy God, as you visited us in the birth of Jesus,  
visit us now by the power of your Spirit  
in these creatures of bread and wine,  
making them for us the Body and Blood of Christ,  
the banquet of heaven here on earth,  
as we remember how Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it  
and gave it to his friends, saying, "Take, eat, This is my body, given  
for you.  
Do this to remember me."

And after supper, took a cup of wine  
and blessed and gave it to them, saying:  
"Drink this, all of you.  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this to remember me."

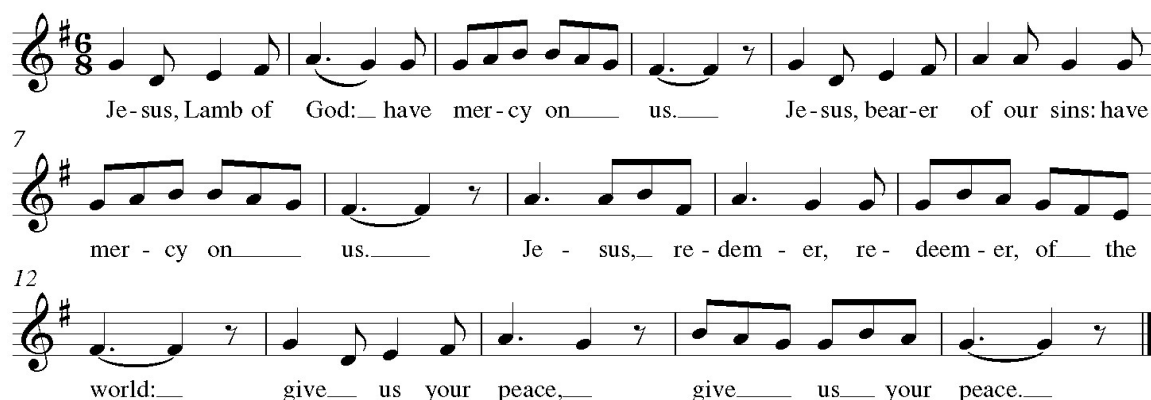
Blessed God, shed your grace brighter than starlight on us  
 that we may bear your good tidings to all  
 and renew the weary world in your name:  
 the name of Emmanuel – God-With-Us,  
 to whom we give honor and glory in joy, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to sing,

Our Fa-ther who art in hea-ven, Hal-lowed be thy Name, Thy king-dom  
 come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in hea-ven. Give us this day our  
 dai-ly bread. For-give us our tres-pas-es, As we for-give those who tres-pass a-gainst us,  
 as we for-give. And lead us not in-to temp-ta-tion, but de-li-ver us from  
 e-vil. Thine is the king-dom and the pow-er and the  
 glo-ry for-ev-er. A-men

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;  
**Therefore let us keep the feast, Alleluia.**



The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

*All baptized persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion.*

*Gluten free wafers are available. If you want just a blessing, please come to the altar rail and cross your arms over your body.*

**Communion Hymn WLP #761 “All who hunger gather gladly”**

**Extending Our Eucharistic Gathering**

*A representative of the parish’s Eucharistic Visitors comes forward to receive the bread and wine reserved for those who are sick or otherwise unable to join us in person.*

In the name of us all at St Paul’s Episcopal Church, we send our Eucharistic Visitors forth bearing these holy gifts that those to whom they go may share with us in this Holy Communion of Christ’s body and blood. May they with whom these gifts are shared remain bound to us, and we to them.

**We who are many are one body, for we all share one bread, one cup.**

## Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray.

**Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom.**

**And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

## Blessing

**Closing Hymn #68 “Rejoice, rejoice believers”**

**Go now to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**We go in the name of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Postlude

Chuck Sheaffer

*All music used with permission, CCLI #1374105*

## Notice of Parish Meeting

As required in the diocesan canons I hereby give notice of the **Annual Meeting of the Parish of St Paul's Episcopal Church, Modesto**, to take place following the 10.00am service on **Sunday January 25th 2026**. This meeting is called to receive reports and a parish budget, discuss matters of parish business as required and to elect members of the Parish Vestry and Delegates and Alternates to Diocesan Convention. **Nomination forms** can be obtained from the Parish Office and should be returned no later than 5.00pm, Wednesday January 14th.

**The Rev'd Brian Dawson, Rector**

## *Poinsettias for Christmas*

The Altar Guild has decorated the altar area with lovely poinsettias. Please contact the church office, 209-522-3267, if you want to purchase any in honor or memory of a loved one.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **COMING UP AT ST PAUL'S**

#### **Wednesday December 24<sup>th</sup> – 7.00pm Family Christmas Eve Service**

A family-friendly Christmas Eve service complete with interactive Christmas story and Holy Communion

#### **Thursday December 25<sup>th</sup> – 10.00am Christmas Day Service**

Eucharist for the Feast of the Nativity

#### **Tuesday January 6<sup>th</sup> – 10.00am Epiphany Day Service**

A brief (30 min) Eucharist for the Feast of the Epiphany.  
Held in the Guadalupe Memorial Chapel in the hall complex.

#### **Wednesday January 7<sup>th</sup> – 5.00pm Interfaith Council Dinner & Meeting**

In 2026 the Stanislaus Interfaith Council is planning to meet at different worship and faith centres each month, beginning with St Paul's. The first part of the event will include a light meal and opportunity for local faith members to share about their worship centre and events. If you can assist with soup please see Fr Brian.

#### **Saturday January 17<sup>th</sup> – 9.00am-3.00pm Winter Retreat Day – Merton Meets Baxter**

A one-day retreat to be held at St Paul's and led by Fr Brian. Focused on the poetry of Thomas Merton and James K. Baxter, this retreat will look at the themes of God and Faith through the works of these two very different but intersecting men. The day is free but all are invited to register with Fr Brian and bring something to share for lunch.



## **Prayer and Praise**

### **Remember those who have asked for our prayers**

Paige, Bonnie, Susan, Ishmael, Mary, Bob, Howard, Cherie, Annamary, Ginny, Keith, Bill, Mike, Jose, Rex S., Lora, Hennie, Kevin, Dorothy, Murray, Gina, James, Brandi, Darlene, Theresa, Tony, Ellen, Sandy, Claudine, Tony, Mindy, Ivy, Diane, Christine, Karen, Clare, Jim, Matt, Deborah, Arnold, Lindsay, Wendy

### **Those who have passed away:**

Priscella Abercrombie

### **Those in the Military:**

CPT Sam Birch, USA

CPT Fred Campbell, USAF

CPT Jenavieve Campbell, USAF

PO1st Class Johnny Olmos, US Coast Guard

SGT Carson Repan, USAF

LTC Nathaniel P. Wallace, USAFR

### **Leaders and Ministries of St. Paul's:**

The Clergy, Vestry & Wardens, Eucharistic Visitors





The poinsettias at the altar today  
are given to  
The Glory of God, Grateful for the Gift of Jesus and  
God's Promise of Life

### **COMING EVENTS (Continued)**

#### **Sunday January 25<sup>th</sup> – 11.30am Parish Annual Meeting**

Our annual receiving of reports and election of new vestry members and representatives.

The meeting will include updates on both the proposed sale of the vacant church land and ongoing maintenance requirements of the campus.

#### **Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup> – Vestry Retreat**

A day long retreat and planning day for Vestry members confirmed at the Annual Meeting.

#### **Friday February 13<sup>th</sup> (evening) – Saturday February 14<sup>th</sup> – Building Church Leaders**

This Diocesan Vestry Training Event is held at ECCO in Oakhurst and is a requirement for Wardens and Treasurers and strongly encouraged for new vestry members (or those who haven't attended before).

#### **Tuesday February 17<sup>th</sup> – Shrove Tuesday**

Details on our annual pancake event coming soon.

#### **Wednesday February 18<sup>th</sup> – Ash Wednesday**

There will be services in both the morning and early evening as well as 'Ashes to Go' at the entrance to the church between noon and 1.00pm.

#### **Lenten Studies 2026**

Our main Lenten Studies series will focus on liturgy and worship. Details coming soon.

## December 2025 Ministry Schedule

Dates	Dec 7 <sup>th</sup>	Dec 14 <sup>th</sup>	Dec 21 <sup>st</sup>	Dec 28 <sup>th</sup>
Clergy	Fr. Brian Dn. Greg	Fr. Brian Dn. Greg	Fr. Brian Dn. Greg	Fr. Brian Dn. Greg
Acolytes	Alex S. Judy T.	Jim P. Judy T.	Nancy S. Gabe T.	Nancy S. Carlos I.
Eucharistic Minister	Stephanie G.	Joyce B.	Sarah H.	Linda L. Joyce B.
Lectors	Stephanie H-W. Barbara V.	Ann M. Alex S.	Judy T. Nancy S.	Linda L. Joyce B.
Intercessor	Jose C.	Alex S.	Luis M.	Nancy S.
Ushers	David L. Carolyn L.	Alex S. Carolyn L.	Luis M. Claudine R.	David L. Claudine R.
Greeters	David L. Carolyn L.	Alex S. Lynelle H.	Luis M. Claudine R.	David L. Lynelle H.
Vestry Rep.	Jose C.	Alex S.	Luis M.	Nancy S.
Coffee Hour Host	Stephanie G.			Jose C. Peter K.
Sunday School	Sarah H.	Evelyn B.	Ann M.	Sarah H.

## ***St. Paul's Episcopal Church***

### **Pastoral Team**

Fr. Brian Dawson.....209-897-1612.....FrBrianDawson@gmail.com  
Deacon Greg Masztal.....deacongreg66@outlook.com  
Stephanie Gilmer, Pastoral Care Coordinator.....mzgilmer@gmail.com

### **Parish Administrator**

Linda Lowe: 209-522-3267 .....stpaulsmodestoca@gmail.com

### **Other Important Contacts**

Music Director, Chuck Sheaffer .....cbshea@pacbell.net  
Hand Bells, Judy Teter .....jlpt@sbcglobal.net  
Prayer Chain .....stpaulsmodestoca@gmail.com  
St. Paul's Epistle, Barbara Vassell .....stpaulsmodestoca@gmail.com  
Social Media, Deacon Greg Masztal .....deacongreg66@outlook.com  
Finance Committee, Carolyn List .....carolynlist@sbcglobal.net  
Stewardship Campaign, Courtney Smith.....courtneyvsmith@gmail.com

### **Vestry**

Senior Warden: Joyce Bell -(215) 275-6502 .....bellj1@charter.net  
Junior Warden: Peter Krewko (707) 853-3604 .....pmkjfc@att.net

Joyce Bell, Jose Cruz, Sarah Hartmann, Peter Krewko, Luis Martinez, Ann Mootz, Chuck Sheaffer, Nancy Silva, and Courtney Smith.

Treasurer: Greg Burnett

Vestry Clerk: Carolyn List



Livestreamed Sundays @ 10am

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Pauls-Episcopal-Church-of-Modesto-CA-106952012668211/>

Then click on videos.

Please note that today's service is being livestreamed on Facebook. If you prefer not to appear on camera, we kindly ask that you sit on the side of the church behind the camera.



Visit St. Paul's website to give online

[www.https://www.saintpaulsmodesto.org/](https://www.saintpaulsmodesto.org/)

